

Operation Ice Palace is a long-term investigation into the illegal sale of large quantities of over-the-counter cold medications to meth manufacturers in southwest Missouri. Today I am joined by our law enforcement partners in that investigation to announce a series of federal indictments against 38 defendants.

Operation Ice Palace targeted businesses that allegedly provided meth cooks with pseudoephedrine, a primary ingredient in the manufacture of methamphetamine.

Operation Ice Palace focused on those who profited financially from the meth trade, who fueled the spread of meth in southwest Missouri by providing the necessary ingredients for its manufacture. Disrupting that illegal supply line is an effective strategy for combating meth by stopping it at the source.

Among 38 defendants charged in the indictments are:

- * The vice president and chief executive officer of Handi-Rak, a distributor of products to convenience stores, along with Handi-Rak's sales manager and four salesmen
- * The owner of The Castle, a head shop in Forsyth, Mo., and four of his employees
- * The owners of nine additional businesses and 14 employees of those and other businesses

These indictments should send a message to all business owners. The legitimate sales of over-the-counter products can't be used as a smokescreen for an illicit black market. We will hold business owners accountable to follow the law, and we will prosecute the suppliers as aggressively as we prosecute meth manufacturers, because they are all links in the same chain.

Law enforcement agencies from the federal, state and local levels joined forces in Operation Ice Palace, and that cooperation resulted in this successful investigation.

*** ASAC Shawn Johnson, DEA

*** Supervisory Special Agent Ernesto Hernandez, IRS

Ron Getty, Resident Agent in Charge of the Springfield office of the ATF

Lt. Tim Rossert, Missouri State Highway Patrol

Steve Dalton, director of COMET – Combined Ozarks Multijurisdictional Enforcement Team

Major Steve Ijames [I'ms] , Springfield Police Department, Commander of the Investigations Division

Greene County Sheriff Jack Merritt

Lawrence County Sheriff Doug Seneker

Ozark County Sheriff Steve Bartlett